

**POLICY FOR THE OPERATION AND USE  
OF**



**The  
City of  
Savannah's  
Government  
Access  
Channel**

*Revised September 2005*

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## **I. CHANNEL DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY**

The City Government Channel is defined in the Cable Television Regulatory Ordinance and the Cable Television Franchise Agreement with Cablevision of Savannah (transferred to Comcast Cable), both enacted by Savannah City Council on January 1, 1990. In the Cable Television Franchise Agreement, City Council established that the cable company “shall set aside and dedicate one channel for City governmental purposes” and that the “use of the channel shall rest exclusively with the City.”

The Public Information Office was established in 1987 and since that time has provided video production and still photography services to document City events and promote public awareness of City services. When the government channel was activated in 1992, following a cable system upgrade outlined in the Cable Television Franchise Agreement, the channel was placed under the auspices of the Public Information Office and was named *Savannah’s Government Channel*. This document serves as a guide to the development and usage of this channel.

## **II. MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

The City of Savannah’s Government Channel is operated by and cablecast from the Public Information Office at City Hall via Comcast Communications of Savannah. The Government Channel’s main objective is to provide non-political, non-editorial direct information to the citizens of Savannah concerning operations and programs of City government. The channel may also provide programs concerning the operations and programs of other area governmental agencies. The Public Information Office encourages requests for program topics.

The City of Savannah’s Government Channel operates as a function of the City of Savannah Public Information Office in such a manner as to maximize service to the public. Liaison and exchange with other local governments involved in video programming and production are established and maintained, as are cooperative arrangements with local broadcast and cable companies and other production groups for efficient operations and communication in the community.

### **III. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

#### **A. Channel Designation**

The City Government Channel was established initially on cable channel 3 and has since been moved to channel 8 and given the designation “Savannah’s Government Channel 8”. In 1998 the cable company, at the request of the City to improve signal reception, moved the channel to City Hall.

#### **B. Modes of Broadcast**

##### **1. Live Broadcasts**

A limited amount of live coverage will be provided. Generally, this will consist of broadcasting of bi-weekly, City Council meetings and selected other public meetings and events of general community interest.

##### **2. Tape-delayed Broadcast**

Many public meetings and events will be videotaped for broadcast at a later time.

##### **3. Municipal TV Produced Programs**

Programs produced by the City of Savannah Public Information Office which illustrate the functions or operations of some form of City government. These might include videotaped documentary programs on the various City services provided to and for citizens, public service announcements, crime prevention outreach programs, and cultural events.

##### **4. Outside Source Programs**

Programming produced outside the City which focuses on local government issues and related interests or concerns, or is determined to be of interest to the community at large.

#### **C. Access Policy**

**The City of Savannah’s Government Channel is not the same as a “public access” channel.** Access to the City’s government channel and operations shall be limited to City functions and operations. Any request for non-City related programming must be specifically authorized by the Public Information Director or the Cable Access Coordinator. A significant departure from established policy is subject to authorization by the City Manager.

## **D. Program Formats**

### **1. Public Meetings**

Public meetings including City Council Meetings, Garden City Council meetings, Board of Education Meetings, City Council Workshops and all meetings of official public record which are broadcast either live or in taped replay, are shown gavel-to-gavel, *and are not edited for content*. Meetings in which there are long delays for recesses or executive sessions may be edited, but only those recessed portions of the meeting may be edited out of the taped playback. Public forums or symposiums which are not a matter of public record, and/or in which a quorum of elected officials do not attend and/or vote may be edited for playback when the program is intended for (and is presented as) portions or highlights of the meeting.

### **2. Informational Programming**

These programs vary in length, but are usually around 30-minutes long. They illustrate the programs and services of the City, document events and department operations, define problem areas, and assess the City's objectives and may include serial or standalone "evergreen" programs. Some examples are:

***Civic Magazine** – featuring the activities of the Mayor and Aldermen*

***Keeping Savannah Green** – a look at the services provided by the City's Park and Tree Department*

***Cemetery Alternatives** – explores burial options provided by the City's Department of Cemeteries*

***Club Savannah** – featuring the many programs and services offered by the Leisure Services Bureau*

***Serving Savannah: Behind the Scenes** – features various City employees as they perform their jobs in service to the citizens of Savannah*

### **3. Public Service Announcements**

Video announcements (usually 30 seconds in length) of City-sponsored events or informational messages about City programs and services are produced as needed. These PSAs may be cablecast on the Government Channel and/or made available to the local cable operator for insertion in local advertising availabilities as provided by the Franchise Agreement. Public Service Announcements will identify the City of Savannah and City department, where appropriate, as sponsor or producer.

### **4. Other Programming**

- a) Broadcasting special live programming from locations as provided for by the Franchise Agreement. The City's Government Channel will, upon occasion, plan special programming, such as budget hearings, community forums. etc., from these locations.

- b) Broadcasting City-sponsored events, job announcements, cultural opportunities and other items of interest to the citizenry via a video bulletin board. This service is provided weekdays in conjunction with regular programming.
- c) Broadcasting other local area governmental meetings. The government channel is accessible, through the Public Information Office, to other local governments and public authorities for broadcasts of meetings and activities.

## **5. In-Service Training**

Production of videos for training and education of City employees or recruitment videos for new employees, not intended for the general public, *are usually not provided or produced by the Public Information Office.*

## **E. Endorsements**

At no time will the City's Government Channel endorse specific brand names of products for consumer use. Any program underwritten by any individual, business or organization may credit that support by acknowledgment as follows:  
This program was made possible (in part) with funds provided by \_\_\_\_\_.

Editorial content and related decisions will rest on the Public Information Office and not the sponsoring agency.

## **F. Promotions**

Promotional announcements for City-sponsored events and public service announcements for City agencies are acceptable for broadcast. All other requests are subject to approval by the Public Information Director or Cable Access Coordinator, who shall, if necessary, direct questions of appropriateness to the City Manager for resolution. *Promotional announcements for political events and activities are not permitted on the City's Government Channel.*

## **G. Use of City Equipment**

Use of City-owned video and related production equipment shall be restricted to City activities and by Public Information Office personnel. *Loaning of equipment for personal or outside agency use shall not be authorized.*

## **H. Videography and Production**

### **1. Requests for Programming**

Requests for programming may be made via memorandum by Bureaus and Departments and by written request from outside agencies and individuals to the Public Information Director or the Cable Access Coordinator. In order to allow for proper production, scheduling, and publicity, requests must be made at least **four weeks in advance** of the intended broadcast date. Requests for information to be included on the video bulletin board must be submitted, in writing, one week in advance of the start date. Start and end dates for announcements must be included in writing.

### **2. Video Tape Duplication**

The Public Information Office provides **free** access to videotapes of City Council meetings broadcast on Savannah's Government Channel at the Chatham County Public Library. Because of programming commitments, requests for videotaping of programs or services provided by the City for broadcast on the City's Government Channel will be granted on a limited basis. A new, blank videotape of acceptable quality must be provided by the individual/agency making the request. Video duplication fees are **\$15** per tape for VHS format (**\$10** if a **new tape** is provided). Requests for copies of programs on other tape formats or media will be handled and priced on an individual basis. Viewers are encouraged to record programs from the cable channel, and unrestricted access is allowed for the videotaping of programming off the air for private use. Government Channel programming remains the property of the Public Information Office and unauthorized use is prohibited without the expressed, written consent from the Public Information Director.

## **I. Program Content**

### **1. Technical Standards**

Before a program or other production is scheduled for broadcast, it must meet minimum technical and broadcast aesthetic standards to be determined by the Cable Access Coordinator and/or the Public Information Director or a designated representative.

### **2. Human Errors**

Should human error result in the broadcast of incorrect information over the City Government Channel, the City of Savannah, its officers, employees, and agents shall be held harmless.

## **J. Departmental Responsibilities**

Bureaus and Departments requesting program development must be willing to assist in writing and producing the program. The requesting department shall be responsible for content development and must identify a contact person to provide necessary information including but not limited to, research, data, persons, and props to be used for the production. The contact person must be available to be on-site during production and post-production as needed.

## **K. Staffing**

To administer the channel, a staff position within the Public Information Office has been established and given the title ***Cable Access Coordinator***. In order to adequately supply video production services for the government channel, and meet the numerous requests by bureau chiefs and department heads for video productions the positions of two ***Video Production Technicians*** (one funded by the City and the other funded on behalf of the City by the cable television franchisee) have been established under the supervision of the ***Cable Access Coordinator***. All three positions are under the direct supervision of the ***Public Information Director***.

## **L. Funding**

Limited funding for equipment, along with limited technical and programming support staff assistance is provided by the cable operator through the Cable Television Franchise Agreement. Public Information Office personnel, small fixed assets, office supplies, some equipment and equipment repairs are budgeted by the Public Information Office.

## **M. Cable Franchise Agreement**

The Public Information Office is responsible for the management of the City's Cable Franchise Agreement, including all rate, customer service and other compliance issues. The PIO is the lead City department on the City's Cable Team (which includes the Assistant City Manager and three department heads from Management & Financial Services) and is the City's liaison with the GMA cable consultant.